

MRS. PARKER, MR. PORTER

**A new musical revue
by**

Peter Moore

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CHARACTERS

MRS. PARKER (middle-aged)

MR. PORTER (middle-aged)

SINGER 1 (male, older)

SINGER 2 (female, older)

SINGER 3 (male, younger)

SINGER 4 (female, younger)

The setting may be anything; designers are encouraged to be imaginative. Scenes may be underscored whenever appropriate.

SONGS

ACT I

Well, Did You Evah

Let's Misbehave

Just One Of Those Things

Always True To You In My Fashion

All Of You

De-lovely

Love For Sale

I Am Loved

Most Gentlemen Don't Like Love

It's Bad For Me

From Alpha To Omega

You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To

Begin The Beguine

Let's Do It

ACT II

Wunderbar

Night & Day

Rosalie

I'm Ridin' High

Tomorrow

Let's Not Talk About Love

At Long Last Love

It's All Right With Me/ I Love Paris/ C'est Magnifique

Ev'ry Time We Say Good-bye

So In Love

I Wished On The Moon (*lyrics by Dorothy Parker and music by Ralph Rainger*)

You're The Top

ACT I

(The lights come up on an attractive setting; somewhere on it is a comfortable, thirties-style sitting area. The band and the four singers begin Well, Did You Evah)

SINGER 3

**When you're out in smart society
And you suddenly get bad news
You mustn't show anxiety**

SINGER 4

And proceed to sing the blues!

SINGER 1

**For example, tell me something sad
Something awful, something grave,
And I'll show you how a Racquet Club lad
Would behave.**

SINGER 2

**Have you heard the coast of Maine
Just got hit by a hurricane?**

SINGER 1

Well, did you evah?

ALL

What a swell party this is!

SINGER 4

**Have you heard that poor dear Blanche
Got run down by an avalanche!**

SINGER 3

Well, did you evah?

ALL

What a swell party this is!

SINGER 1

It's great, it's grand

SINGER 2

It's Wonderland!

It's tops, it's first SINGER 3

It's DuPont, it's Hearst! SINGER 4

What soup, what fish, SINGER 1

That meat, what a dish! SINGER 3

What salad, what cheese! SINGER 4

**Pardon me one moment, please,
Have you heard that Uncle Newt
Forgot to open his parachute?** SINGER 2

Well, did you evah? SINGER 4

What a swell party this is! ALL

**Have you heard that Mimsie Starr
Just got pinched in the Astor Bar?** SINGER 1

Well, did you evah? SINGER 2

What a swell party this is! ALL

It's fun, it's fine, it's too divine, MEN

It's smooth, it's smart, it's Rodgers and Hart, WOMEN

What debs, MEN

WOMEN

What stags, what gossip,

MEN

What gags, what feathers, what fuss,

WOMEN

Just between the two of us,

ALL

**Have you heard it's in the stars,
Next July we collide with Mars!
Well, did you evah,
What a swell party, a swell party,
What a swell-e-gant, elegant party this is!**

(The lights come up on Mrs. Parker & Mr. Porter as they enter the sitting area. Porter walks with a cane or crutches)

MR. PORTER

Mrs. Parker!

MRS. PARKER

Mr. Porter! How lovely to finally meet you! I've been an admirer of yours since Hector was a pup.

MR. PORTER

The admiration is mutual, I can promise you. I've loved everything of yours I've ever read.

MRS. PARKER

Oh, you're sweet!

MR. PORTER

A cocktail?

MRS. PARKER

Oh, God. One more drink and I'll be under the host. Well, what the hell! *(recites):*
Drink and dance and laugh and lie,
Love the reeling midnight through,
For tomorrow, we shall die!
(But, alas, we never do.)

(the band starts Let's Misbehave)

SINGER 4

**You could have a great career,
And you should.
Only one thing stops you dear-
You're too good.
If you want a future, darling,
Why don't you get a past?
'Cause that fatal moment's coming,
At last.**

**We're all alone
No chaperone
Can get our number,
The world's in slumber,
Let's misbehave!**

SINGER 3

**There's something wild
About you, child,
That's so contagious,
Let's be outrageous,
Let's misbehave!**

SINGER 4

**When Adam won Eve's hand,
He wouldn't stand for teasin',
He didn't care about
Those apples out of season.**

BOTH

**They say that bears
Have love affairs
And even camels;
We're merely mammals
Let's misbehave!**

(the music continues under the following)

MRS. PARKER

I think that song was the anthem for our generation. How we managed to misbehave for an entire decade is beyond me. I'm amazed any of us lived through it! All that drinking and dancing and carrying-on...

MR. PORTER

It was the Twenties! Wasn't it grand?

MRS. PARKER

Oh, yes, between the blackouts and the failed love affairs and the trips to the hospital, I suppose it was.

MR. PORTER

It was grand! The war was over, we were young and the world was our oyster.

MRS. PARKER *(dryly)*

You came from money, didn't you.

MR. PORTER

I did indeed. My grandfather was the richest man in Peru, Indiana. How about you?

MRS. PARKER

Not at all. I did alright later on, I suppose, but I was never what you'd call 'rich-rich'.

MR. PORTER

I heard that when you and he divorced, Mr. Parker left you fairly comfortable.

MRS. PARKER

Yes, it was fairly comfortable whenever he left. *(recites)*

Oh, seek, my love, your newer way;

I'll not be left in sorrow.

So long as I have yesterday,

Go take your damned tomorrow!

(the band starts Just One Of Those Things)

SINGER 1

As Dorothy Parker once said to her boyfriend,

SINGERS 2 & 4

"Fare thee well"!

SINGER 1

As Columbus announced when he knew he was bounced,

SINGER 3

"It was swell, Isabel, swell!"

SINGER 1

As Abelard said to Heloise,

SINGER 2

"Don't forget to drop me a line, please."

SINGER 1

As Juliet cried in her Romeo's ear,

SINGER 4

"Romeo, why not face the fact, my dear?"

SINGER 1

**It was just one of those things,
Just one of those crazy flings,
One of those bells that now and then rings,
Just one of those things.
It was just one of those nights,
Just one of those fabulous flights,
A trip to the moon on gossamer wings,
Just one of those things.**

(the music continues under the following)

MR. PORTER

Woman wants monogamy;

MRS. PARKER

Man delights in novelty.

MR. PORTER

Love is woman's moon and sun;

MRS. PARKER

Man has other forms of fun.

MR. PORTER

Woman lives but in her lord;

MRS. PARKER

Count to ten, and man is bored.

MR. PORTER

With this the gist and sum of it,

MRS. PARKER

What earthly good can come of it?

(the band swings into Always True To You In My Fashion)

SINGER 4

**If a custom-tailored vet
Asks me out for something wet
When the vet begins to pet, I cry “Hooray!”
But I’m always true to you, darlin’ in my fashion,
Yes, I’m always true to you darlin’ in my way!
I could never curl my lip
To a dazzlin’ diamond clip
Though the clip meant, “let ‘er rip” I’d not say “Nay!”
But I’m always true to you, darlin’, in my fashion,
Yes, I’m always true to you darlin’ in my way.
Mister Gable, I mean Clark,
Wants me on his boat to park,
If the Gable boat means a sable coat,
Anchors aweigh!
But I’m always true to you, darlin’ in my fashion,
Yes, I’m always true to you, darlin’ in my way!
Yes, I’m always true to you, darlin’ in my way!**

(the lights return to Mrs. Parker & Mr. Porter)

MRS. PARKER

You know, Moss Hart told me you wrote Just One Of Those Things in one night for a show.

MR. PORTER

Yes, and they didn’t change a word. That first draft was the only draft, ever. *(he smiles)* If only they were all that easy.

MRS. PARKER

God, I hate writing. I love having written.

MR. PORTER

I love having written about love.

(the band starts All Of You)

MR. PORTER

**After watching her appeal from every angle,
There’s a big romantic deal I’ve got to wrangle.
For I’ve fallen for a certain luscious lass,
And it’s not a passing fancy or a fancy pass.
I love the looks of you, the lure of you,
I’d love to make a tour of you,
The eyes, the arms, the mouth of you,
The east, west, north and the south of you,**

**I'd love to gain complete control of you,
And handle even the heart and soul of you,
So love, at least, a small percent of me do,
For I love all of you.**

(the lights shift back.)

MRS. PARKER

Oh, yes, June moon, spoon croon, ain't love grand. You know, if you gave me a nickel for every time love was really like that? I'd probably owe *you* money!

MR. PORTER

Ah, that bitter façade doesn't fool me! I think you're much more romantic than you let on. You married, what- three times?

MRS. PARKER

Yes, but twice to the same man. A classic example of the triumph of hope over experience.

MR. PORTER

Ooh, very good! One of yours?

MRS. PARKER

No, Oscar Wilde. I get that a lot. *(recites)*

If, with the literate, I am

Impelled to try an epigram,

I never seek to take the credit:

We all assume that Oscar said it.

(she continues) Now, you, on the other hand- you were married to the same woman for how long?

MR. PORTER

35 years. She was beautiful, smart, from a very good family- the great love of my life. Or perhaps I should say, the great *female* love of my life.

MRS. PARKER

Oh, that's right. You were- how shall I put this- one of Nature's Bachelors, weren't you? Tends to put a little strain on a marriage, doesn't it. The fellow I married twice was the same way. He denied it, of course, and he truly was a wonderful man, but I'm sure he was queer as a billy goat. Hardly conducive to a non-acrimonious domestic situation, no?

MR. PORTER

Yes. Linda and I were not without our problems.

MRS. PARKER

Ugh. We're starting to talk like Harold Ross, my editor at the New Yorker. He used to say things like, "Don't think I'm not incoherent." *(she shudders)*

MR. PORTER

Well, did *you* write about anything besides love?

MRS. PARKER

Sure. Betrayal, heartbreak...death. *(recites)*

Razors pain you,
Rivers are damp,
Acids stain you,
Drugs cause cramp.
Guns aren't lawful,
Nooses give,
Gas smells awful,
You might as well live. *(she laughs)*

MR. PORTER

I'd definitely rather write about love.

(the band starts De-lovely as the lights shift to the singers)

SINGER 1

**I feel a sudden urge to sing
The kind of ditty that invokes the spring,
So control your desire to curse
While I crucify the verse.**

SINGER 2

**This verse you've started seems to me
The Tin-Pantithesis of melody,
So spare me, please, the pain,
Just skip the damn thing and sing the refrain.**

MRS. PARKER

Mi, mi, mi, mi, re, re, re, re, do, sol, mi, do, la si,

MR. PORTER

Take it away!

SINGER 1

**The night is young, the skies are clear,
So if you want to go walking dear,
It's delightful, it's delicious, it's de-lovely.
I understand the reason why**

**You're sentimental, 'cause so am I,
It's delightful, it's delicious, it's de-lovely!
You can tell at a glance
What a swell night this is for romance,
You can hear dear Mother Nature murmuring low,
'Let yourself go.'
So please be sweet, my chickadee,
And when I kiss you just say to me,
It's delightful, it's delicious, it's delectable, it's delirious,
It's dilemma, it's delimit, it's deluxe,
It's de-lovely!**

SINGER 4

**Oh charming sir, the way you sing,
Would break the heart of Missus Crosby's Bing,
For the tone of your tra-la-la
Has that certain je ne sais quoi.**

SINGER 3

**Oh thank thee kindly, winsome wench,
But 'stead of falling into Berlitz French
Just warble to me, please,
This beautiful strain in plain Brooklynese.**

MR. PORTER

Mi, mi, mi, mi, re, re, re, re, do ,sol, mi, do, la, si,

MRS. PARKER

Take it away!

SINGER 4

**Time marches on and soon it's plain,
You've won my heart and I've lost my brain,
It's delightful, it's delicious, it's de-lovely!
Life seems so sweet that we decide
It's in the bag to get unified,
It's delightful, it's delicious, it's de-lovely!
See that crowd in that church,
See the proud parson plopped on his perch,
Get the sweet beat of that organ, sealing our doom,
Here goes the groom, boom!
How they cheer and how they smile
As we go galloping down that aisle,**

ALL 4 SINGERS

It's de-reamy, it's de-rowsy, it's de-reverie, it's de-rhapsody,

**It's de-regal, it's de-royal, it's de-Ritz,
It's de-lovely!**

(the lights shift)

MRS. PARKER

God, that's a fun song. If only it bore the slightest resemblance to real life!

MR. PORTER *(smiling)*

Pretty cynical, for someone who fell in love as much as you did.

MRS. PARKER

Yes, the more fool I. *(recites)*

My own dear love, he is strong and bold

And he cares not what comes after.

His words ring sweet as a chime of gold,

And his eyes are lit with laughter.

He is jubilant as a flag unfurled-

Oh, a girl she'd not forget him.

My own dear love, he is all my world--

And I wish I'd never met him. *(she smiles)*

So- if a disastrous love life, a few suicide attempts and raging drunkenness constitute romanticism, then sign me up as the poster girl.

(the lights slowly isolate her. She addresses the audience)

Did you know I was Jewish? Well, half, anyway. I was born Dorothy Rothschild. No relation to those Rothschilds, unfortunately. Only my father was Jewish, so as a friend of mine likes to say, I'm not really one of the Chosen People but I *am* an alternate.

My mother died when I was five and two years later my father married a truly hideous woman I used to refer to as 'the housekeeper.' She was a deeply religious Protestant who talked Daddy into sending me to a Catholic elementary school, where the nuns and I got on like gas and matches. It probably didn't help that I would do things like refer to the Immaculate Conception as the Spontaneous Combustion.

Anyway, the step-mater shuffled off this mortal coil when I was nine, and by the time I was thirteen, my formal schooling came to an end. Daddy died when I was nineteen, and a year later while I was making my living as a piano player at a dancing school, I sold my first poem to Vanity Fair. A few months later I was hired as an editorial assistant at Vogue, was there for two years before going back to be a staff writer at Vanity Fair (or as I later called it, Vanity Fair To Middling), married Edwin Parker mostly so I didn't have to be a Rothschild anymore, divorced him, had several drinks, made a few friends, had a few lunches at the Algonquin, had my heart broken, broke a few myself, had a few more drinks and went on to fame and fortune as a poet, critic, screenplay writer, wit, party girl, muse and all-around good joe, blahdy-blahdy blah.

Sometimes I think I'd trade it all for a mother who lived, a father I liked, a husband who actually loved me and a sense that I deserved the remarkable life I got.

(the band starts In The Still Of The Night)

MRS. PARKER

**In the still of the night
As I gaze from my window
At the moon in its flight,
My thoughts all stray to you.
In the still of the night,
While the world is in slumber,
Oh, the times without number,
Darling when I say to you,
“Do you love me as I love you?
Are you my life to be, my dream come true?”
Or will this dream of mine
Fade out of sight
Like the moon
Growing dim
On the rim
Of the hill
In the chill,
Still
Of the night?**

(the lights restore)

MRS. PARKER

That song always makes me want to have a party. With only one other person there.

MR. PORTER *(changing the subject)*

Say, speaking of parties, someone told me that you were once sitting next to Somerset Maugham at some dinner and he asked you to compose a poem right then and there, and you wrote: *(recites)*

“Higgeldy-piggeldy, my fat hen,
She lays eggs for gentlemen.

You cannot persuade her with gun or lariat

To come across for the proletariat.” I also heard one about you and some grande dame about to enter an elevator at the same time and she stopped to let you go in first, saying, “Age before beauty.” And you graciously stepped into the elevator in front of her and turned around and said, “Pearls before swine.” Is either of those stories true?

MRS. PARKER

Oh, God, who knows. Probably. But if I had said all the things everyone says I said, when would I have had the time to say anything else? Besides, it was the Twenties, damn it; we had to be smarty. Or in your case, excessively romantic.

MR. PORTER

I'll plead guilty to romantic, but I don't think I'm the least bit excessive.

MRS. PARKER

Oh, the hell you're not. I swear, I think your two favorite words were 'love' and 'love.'

MR. PORTER

And what would you say were *your* two favorite words?

MRS. PARKER

'Check enclosed.'

MR. PORTER

Well, I'd say I have a rather realistic view of love, and that my songs reflect that. I think I know the difference between 'romantic' and 'hopelessly starry-eyed'.

MRS. PARKER

Yes. Three drinks.

MR. PORTER

I had my share of tough breaks, and I'd guess my heart was broken at least as often as yours...

MRS. PARKER

...well, sure, given your preferences, you'd have had twice as many opportunities...

MR. PORTER

...but I still believe that love isn't just a romantic ideal, but a glorious fact.

(the band starts I Am Loved)

SINGER 4

**Yesterday was a dull day,
Yesterday was a gray day,
But oh today,
Today is a gay day,
You ask me, darling, why?
And I answer:
I am loved,
I am loved,
By the one I love in every way,**